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Introduction To John

We want to begin by looking at an introduction to the Gospel of John in order that we may understand it as a whole by examining the parts, the peculiarities and the obvious material chosen with design to serve the purpose of the author.

The gospel of John has been looked at from the beginning of it's composition as a distinct and invaluable document.

Some of the comments that have been made by individuals regarding John's gospel will help us to appreciate it's beauty and priceless content.

1. Origen the biblical scholar of the third century said, "The Gospels are the first fruits of all the Scriptures, but of the Gospels that of John is the first fruit".
2. Luther judged that the Gospel of John is unique in loveliness, and of a truth the principal gospel, far, far superior to the other three, and much to be preferred."
3. Alfred Plummer, a British scholar of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, asserts that this gospel is "a book which stands alone in Christian literature, as its author stands alone among Christian teachers."
4. Hendrikson, a contemporary scholar, asserts, "The gospel according to John is the most amazing book

that was ever written, "because its author wholeheartedly believed the amazing claims of the One whose story he records.

I. The authorship

- A. The traditional acceptance has been that the apostle John is the author of the fourth Gospel.
 1. He identifies himself as a disciple and eyewitness of the things he recorded. 21:24a-b
 2. He affirms with others that the facts are true. 21:4c
 3. Some say that this is part of the epilogue and that John did not write this last chapter.
 - a. If so it adds more credibility by their witness to it's validity.
 - b. If John did write it, the statement is to an extent a seal of authenticity.
 4. The Gospel has been attacked.
 - a. Renan in 117, 138 A.D.
 - b. Keim in 138 A.D.
 - c. The Tubingen German school.
 - d. Professor Bretshnerder.in 1820.
 - e. An Englishman named Evanson in 1792.
- B. The external evidence of the gospel.

1. Eusebius in his noted encyclopedial History records the results of his investigations concerning the four gospels. In relation to John's he says, "His Gospel, which is known to all the churches under heaven, must be acknowledged as genuine." He declares in the same chapter that not only the gospel but all of his writings have been accepted without dispute both now and in ancient times. 324 or 325 A.D.
2. Thiessen states that the evidence for the apostles authorship is as great as that for any other in the New Testament.
3. The principle witness is Irenaeus in his work Against Heresies, written in 185 A.D., where he names the John as the author.
 - a. He declares, "Afterwards after the synoptics were written, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His chest, did himself publish a gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia."
 - b. Irenaeus as a youth lived in Asia Minor, where according to his own testimony, he know Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, who had been a personal disciple of the apostle John.
 - c. In a letter to his Florinus, a boyhood friend, Irenaeus reminded him of their

early mutual acquaintance with Polycarp and of Polycarp's reminiscences of his conversations with John and others who had seen the Lord.

- d. Polycarp was martyred in A.D. 155, when he had been a Christian for 86 years.
4. The supporting testimony of Irenaeus is two fold.
 - a. The church Fathers
 - 1) Theophilus of Antioch quoted Jn. 1:1 and ascribed it to the apostle John. 181A.D.
 - 2) Tertullian specifically ascribes the gospel to the apostle John. 150-222 A.D.
 - 3) Clament of Alexandria in his Hypotyposes, where he gives "the tradition of the earliest presbyters, " places the gospel as the last of the four. 155-216A.D.
 - 4) Origen the pupil of Clament, indicates in his commentary on the fourth gospel that its author was John "who lay on Jesus' breast." 185-254A.D.
 - b. The enemies of the gospel.
 - 1) Porphyry and Julian, enemies of Christianity attested to John's authorship.

2) The earliest known commentary on the fourth gospel was written by Ptolemaeus, a follower of the Gnostic school of Valentinus, in which he refers to "John the disciple of the Lord" in support of his views.

* Irenaeus makes it clear that the Valentinian heretics used John's gospel which they accepted as authoritative.

3) Heracleon, a Gnostic commentator on John, who flourished during the middle of the second century, quoted from Jn. 1:18 and attributed it to the disciple John, not John the Baptist.

4) Basilides, a Gnostic teacher in Alexandria quoted Jn. 1:9 verbally. 117-138 A.D.

5) Tatian who became a heretic after the death of his teacher Justin Martyr, accepted the fourth gospel and used it in composing his harmony of the gospels "Diatessaron". 170 A.D.

C. The internal evidence of the Gospel.

1. John identifies himself throughout the gospel indirectly. Jn. 18:15-16; 19:35; 21:20-24

* Westcott points out that the tense is the perfect tense "he that has seen has born

witness" indicating that the witness was still alive at the time. Jn. 19:35

2. John identifies himself by the phrase the disciple whom Jesus loved. Jn. 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20

3. The familiar knowledge of Jerusalem.

a. He distinguishes the two Bethany's, the one in the suburbs of Jerusalem and the one on the other side of Jordan. Jn. 1:28

b. Sights and places are identified and described with personal knowledge.

1) Anon, Ephraim that are mentioned nowhere else. Jn. 3:23; 11:54

2) The Temple details of business, the sheeps Gate, the Pool of Siloam and the pavement of judgment. Jn. 2:14-16; 5:2; 9:7; 19:13

3) Personal knowledge of Jesus and the conversations and detail with His disciples. Jn. 6:5-7; 12:21; 13:36; 14:5, 8, 22

4) The unique use of the term "Logos" for Jesus found in John's other epistles. Jn. 1:1, 14; 1Jn. 1:1; Rev. 19:13

II. The intended audience and date.

A. The majority of those in the past and the present think it written to the church.

1. The audience is a second and third generation of believers, assuming that the accepted date around 90 A.D.
 2. The text which declares the purpose of the gospel can be good proof for it being written to the church. Jn. 20:31
 - a. Some manuscripts have it in the present tense which would indicate that it was written in order that the Christian continue to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the church being a 2nd to 3rd generation.
 - b. Other manuscripts have the aorist tense that would indicate it was written in order to produce belief in Jesus and have eternal life.
 - * Either way the church is the one responsible for both of these aspects!
 3. John interprets for his audience Hebrew names and titles and translates them to gentile meanings.
 - a. Messiah to Christ.
 - b. Rabbi to teacher etc.
- B. The date of the Gospel.**
1. The dates given to the gospel has varied from 45 A.D. to 150 A.D., but the late dates have been silenced since the discovery of the papyrus in Egypt
 2. The Rylands fragments and the Egerton papyrus dated 135 A.D.

3. That means that the Gospel of John had to of been written sometime between 85-98 A.D.
4. The accepted date is 90 A.D.
5. The gospel is in the Moratorian Canon of the 2nd Century also.

III. The unique characteristics of the Gospel.

- A. The simplicity and profundity of the Gospel.**
1. It has been said to be, "a pool in which a child can wade and an elephant can swim."
 2. It is monosyllabic in it's simplicity as it is composed of one syllable words and it's sentences are not long and complicated as Paul's
 3. John uses fewer words than any of the Synoptics but they are profound in meaning. "Scroggie"
 4. It is declared to be by Philip Schaff, "Simple as a child, deep as the sea and high as the heavens."
- B. The key words are many.**
1. Believe, 98 times.
 2. Life and live, 52 times.
 3. I am, 23 times.
 4. Witness, 47 times.
 5. Love, abide, truth, receive and send etc.

- C.** The contrasts are obvious.
1. Light and darkness.
 2. Truth and witness.
 3. Life and death
 4. Forgiveness and judgment.
- D.** The uniqueness of the prologue.
1. It is the nucleus of the entire gospel in proclaiming what is to follow.
 2. It does not begin with the earthly ministry of Jesus or His birth but His heavenly pre-existence.
 3. It clearly establishes who the "Logos" is the Eternal God of all the ages.
 4. It begins with the place of Jesus with the father and it closes with Jesus in the bosom of the Father. Jn. 1:1, 18
- E.** The commentary of John on the gospel is unique.
1. He explains the proclamation of Jesus on the last day of the great feast regarding the Holy Spirit. Jn. 7:39
 2. He explains the Jewish customs. Jn. 2:6; 4:9; 7:2; 10:22; 18:28; 19:31, 41, 42
 3. He explains places. Jn. 4:5; 5:2; 6:1; 1:1, 18; 12:1, 21
- F.** The comparisons with the Synoptics.

1. The first three gospels are a presentation of Jesus, while the fourth is an interpretation.
2. The first three deal with the public ministry of Jesus, John deals with the private conversations.
3. The first three focus more on the Galilian ministry, John on the Judean.
4. The first three on facts, John on doctrine.
5. The first three begin with the human origin of Jesus, John with His divine origin.
6. John does not present His birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, the last supper, Gathsemane, or ascension.
7. John presents eight miracles in contrast to Matthew's 20, Marks 18 and Luke's 20.
8. John presents no parables, unless we accept 10:6 as the only one in contrast to Matthew's 16, Marks 5 and Luke's 20.
9. John quotes the O.T. only 14 times directly. Jn. 1:23; 2:17; 6:31, 45; 7:38, 42; 10:34; 12:13-15, 38-40; 13:18; 15:25; 19:24, 28, 36-37
10. John has purposely chosen his material. Jn. 20:30-31
11. John provides for us blocks of material omitted by the others such as when Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him and John tells us they had

already met and even traveled with Jesus to Judea and Galilee. Jn. 1:40; 4:2-3

* The synoptics record the late call to full time ministry.

12. John tells us that Jesus began in doing miracles in Jerusalem and this new traveled to Galilee. Jn. 2:23; 3:2; 4:45

13. John's dates help to place and perceive the proper order and length of Jesus' ministry.

IV. The apostle John.

A. His family.

1. He is the brother of James, Sons of Thunder. Matt. 4:21; Mk.1:19; Lk. 5:10, Jn. 21:2, Lk. 9:54
2. He is called son of Zebedee. Matt. 27:56, Mk. 15:40, 16:1
3. His mother is Solome. Mk. 15:41,16:1
4. His family had means, they had servants. Mk. 1:20

B. His person.

1. He was a fisherman, partner with Peter. Lk. 5:7-10
2. He was a disciple of John the Baptist first then of Jesus. Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:19-20; Lk. 5:1-11; Jn. 1:29, 46
3. He was one of the inner circle. Matt. 17:1-8; Mk. 9:2-8, 49; 22:8

4. He asked the Lord if it was him who would betray Him. Jn. 13:22-25

C. His character.

1. He was the only one who followed Jesus with Peter to the judgment. Jn. 18:15-16
2. He was the only one at the cross. Jn. 19:26
3. He was to care for Mary the Mother of Jesus. Jn. 19:27
4. He ran to the tomb with Peter. Jn. 20:3-4

D. His life after Pentecost.

1. He is mentioned in Acts 9 times in association with Peter. Jn. 1:13; 3:1; 4:1-13; 8:14
2. He was banished to the island of Patmos according to tradition after being boiled in oil but Domitian. Rev. 1:9 (Eusebius, The Ecclesias)
3. He would be carried in his old age at Ephesus towards the end of his life according to Jerome and he would simple say, "Little children love one another", when asked why he always repeated the same thing, he said, "It is the Lord's commandment and if this alone is done, it is enough".

V. The interesting pattern of eight in John. (J. SidlowBaxter)

A. Eight miracles.

1. The water into wine. Jn. 2
2. The healing of the nobleman's son. Jn. 4
3. The curing of the paralytic. Jn. 5
4. The feeding of the 5,000. Jn. 6
5. The walking on the Sea of Galilee. Jn. 6
6. The raising of Lazarus. Jn. 11
7. The restoring of the sight of the blind. Jn. 9
8. The catching of the fish. Jn. 21

B. The number eight is symbolic of new beginnings.

1. There are seven notes on the musical scale, the 8th is a new beginning.
2. The first miracle was to manifest His glory and His and his disciple to believe and the 8th comes full circle and they believe in Him. Jn. 2:11; 21:12
3. There are 4,000 years from Adam to John the Baptists, 2,000 years from Jesus to the present and 1,000 years in the millennial reign, the 8,000 year is the New Creation.
4. The miracles are sequential, the first two are numbered.
5. The miracles are selected with a purpose in mind. Jn. 20:31
6. The miracles communicate transformation of divine power.

C. Eight private interviews.

1. Peter and Nathaniel. Jn. 1:35-51
2. Nicodemus. Jn. 3:1-21
3. The woman of Samaria. Jn. 4:6-26
4. The man born blind. Jn. 9:35
5. The sisters Mary and Martha. Jn. 11
6. The eleven apostles. Jn. 13-16
7. Mary Magdalene. Jn. 20:1-18
8. Peter. 21:15-23

D. They affirm the theme of power. Jn. 1:12

1. As many as received Him.
2. To them He gave the authority to become children of God.
3. Even to those who believe in His name.
4. All the eight individuals in the private interviews were made new in the power of Jesus.

VI. The outline of the book.**A. The prologue. Jn. 1:1-18**

1. The Word from eternity. Jn. 1:1-5
2. The witness of John of Jesus. Jn. 1:6-12
3. The Word incarnate. Jn. 1:13-18

B. The body. Jn. 1:19-ch. 20

1. The public ministry of Jesus to the Jews. Jn. 1:19-ch. 12
* The seven sign miracles.

2. The private ministry of Jesus to His own.
ch. 13-17
* The last week.
3. The Passover lamb slain and power over death. ch. 18-20
* Death and resurrection.

C. The Epilogue. ch. 21

1. The reunion at Galilee. Jn. 21:1-14
2. The restoration of Peter. Jn. 21:15-19
3. The reliable word of John. Jn. 21:20-25